

# ALASKA FARM REPORTER

Alaska Division of Agriculture  
Alaska Cooperative Extension  
Ag & Forestry Experiment Station



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service  
P.O. Box 799  
Palmer, AK 99645

---

March 22, 2001

## HIGHLIGHTS

**POTATO STOCKS ON MARCH 1, 2001 TOTALED 52 PERCENT OF THE 2000 CROP**

**ALASKA MILK PRODUCTION DOWN 7 PERCENT FROM LAST MONTH BUT 13 PERCENT MORE THAN A YEAR AGO**

**U.S. PRICES RECEIVED INDEX FOR FEBRUARY UP 2\_ POINTS FROM JANUARY.**

**U.S. PRICES PAID WAS UP 2 POINTS FROM JANUARY 2001.**

**U.S. HONEY PRODUCTION UP 8 PERCENT**

## POTATO STOCKS

**ALASKA:** Alaska storages held a total of 67,000 cwt of potatoes on March 1, 2001. This was down from 111,000 cwt on hand last year. The five-year average stocks in storage on March 1 is 95,700 cwt. Disappearance since February 1 was 10,000 cwt, down 9,500 cwt from a year ago and down 5,300 cwt from the five year average of 15,300 cwt. Disappearance since January 1 has been 22,800 cwt compared with 35,000 cwt for the same period in 2000.

**15 MAJOR STATES:** Potato stocks on March 1 totaled a record high 198 million cwt, up 17 percent from last year and 5 percent above the previous record set on March 1, 1997. Stocks accounted for 43 percent of fall potato production in 15 storage States, up 3 percentage point from last year.

**WESTERN STATES** held 150 million cwt of potatoes in storage on March 1, 2000, up 19 percent from last year and 20 percent above two years ago. Washington's stocks were up 43 percent from a year ago, while Idaho's stocks increased 15 percent and Oregon's stocks were up 12 percent. Colorado's stocks were up 1 percent and Montana's were up 11 percent from last year. California's stocks were down 28 percent from a year ago. Stocks held in the Northwest(Washington, Idaho, and Oregon), accounted for 67 percent of the total US stocks.

## MILK PRODUCTION

**ALASKA:** February milk production of 1,080,000 pounds was up 13 percent from the 960,000 pounds a year earlier but 7 percent below January 2001. Production per cow at 980 pounds, was down 80 pounds from a year ago and compares with 1,060 in January. Milk cows at 1,100 head were unchanged from January but 200 more than a year ago. Total milk production for January and February period was 2,240,000 pounds compared with 1,930,000 pounds in 2000.

**MAJOR STATES:** Milk production in the 20 Major States totaled 11.2 billion pounds in February, down 4.3 percent from February 2000. Adjusting production for the additional day would put February milk production down 0.9 percent from last year. Production per cow averaged 1,440 pounds, 66 pounds below February 2000. The number of cows on farms was 7.77 million head, 7,000 head more than a year ago but 10,000 less than January 2000.

The February milk-feed price ratio, at 3.07 compares with a revised 3.07 in January and 2.94 in February 2000.

### **U.S. AGRICULTURAL PRICES**

The All Farm Products Index of **PRICES RECEIVED** in February was 99 based on 1990-92=100, up 2 points (2.1 percent) from the January index. The seasonal changes in the mix of commodities farmers sell affects the overall index level. Higher seasonal marketings of milk, cattle, broilers, and strawberries partially offset the lower marketings of corn, soybeans, tobacco, and cotton. These marketing changes accounted for most of the February index increase. Higher prices for lettuce, broilers, oranges, and hogs were partially offset by price decreases for strawberries, soybeans, corn, and tomatoes.

Compared to February 2000, the All Farm Products Index was 6 points (6.5 percent) higher. Price increases from February 2000 for cattle, lettuce, milk, and broilers were partially offset by lower prices for soybeans, corn, grapefruit, and potatoes.

**MEAT ANIMALS:** The February index, at 98, was up 1.0 percent from last month and 7.7 percent from a year ago. The February hog price was \$38.60 per cwt, up \$1.40 from January but down \$1.30 from a year ago. The February beef cattle price of \$74.70 was down 10 cents from last month but up \$7.10 from a year ago. January cattle slaughter was up 10 percent in December. Marketing supplies were declining seasonally.

**PRICES PAID:** The February index of Prices Paid for Commodities and Services, Interest, Taxes, and Farm Wage Rates (PPITW) was 126 percent of the 1990-92 average. The index was up 2 points (1.6 percent) from January and 7 points (5.9 percent) above February 2000. Higher prices in February for nitrogen fertilizers, complete feeds, insecticides, and LP gas, were more than offset by lower prices for feeder cattle, feed grains, and potash and phosphate materials.

### **U.S. CROP PRODUCTION**

All **ORANGE** production for the 2000-01 season is forecast at 12.4 million tons, unchanged from the previous forecast in February and but 6 percent less than last season's. Florida's production is forecast at 223 million boxes (10.0 million tons), the same as last month but 4 percent less than utilized last season. Early and mid-season varieties in Florida are forecast at 127 million boxes (5.72 million tons), unchanged from a month ago but 3 percent lower than last season.

**GRAPEFRUIT:** The March 1 forecast of the 2000-01 U.S. grapefruit crop remains unchanged at 2.60 million tons, down 6 percent from last season. The Florida grapefruit forecast is 49.0 million boxes (2.08 million tons), unchanged from the February forecast but 8 percent lower than the previous season.

### **US HONEY PRODUCTION UP 8 PERCENT**

Honey production in 2000 from producers with five or more colonies totaled 221 million pounds, up 8 percent from 1999. There were 2.63 million colonies producing honey in 2000, down 2 percent from 1999. Yield per colony averaged 83.9 pounds, up 7.5 pounds from the 76.4 pounds in 1999. Colonies which produced in more than one State were counted in each State and yields per colony may be understated. Colonies were not counted if honey was not harvested. Producer honey stocks were 86.2 million pounds on December 15, 2000, up 9 percent from a year earlier.

## **FARM PRICES UP SLIGHTLY IN EARLY 2001**

While the general weakness in agricultural markets of the past couple of years continues, early signs of recovery are evident. Many farm sector indicators continue to remain favorable, including asset values and debt levels, due in large part to record government payments. Global stocks of major crops are not excessive compared with use, farm prices are generally up from a year ago, and reduced plantings in 2001 could lead to a further drawdown of stocks. However, the next couple of years are unlikely to see a strong rebound in farm prices and market income for major crops, unless global crop production drops significantly. In the longer term, continuing improvement in global economic growth will lead to stronger U.S. exports, further gains in agricultural commodity prices, and rising farm income.

## **MODEST RISE IN FOOD PRICES THIS YEAR**

Consumers can expect modest increases in food prices for the fourth year in a row, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all food projected up 2 to 2.5 percent in 2001. For food prepared at home, the CPI in 2001 is projected to rise 2 to 2.5 percent while food away from home is expected up 2.5 to 3 percent. The downward trend in share of

Household disposable income spent on food should continue. Continuing large meat production, lackluster growth in exports, and a slowing domestic economy may pressure meat prices downward. A combination of reduced winter acreage in first-quarter 2001 and several bouts of sub-freezing weather in Florida have reduced supplies of fresh-market vegetables and raised produce prices.

## **CHANGES IN THE ALASKA OFFICE**

Spring is a time of change, and we are having changes in the Alaska office. We bid a fond farewell to Marge Burgess, a 20+ year veteran of this office. We wish her well in her retirement. Her experience and dedication will be missed. We also want to introduce Melody Roos, who has been hired to fill Marge's shoes. An Alaskan resident, she is doing an able job in picking up where Marge left off. This will be my final report, as I have taken a similar job in Richmond Virginia. Although my stay has been short, I have come to appreciate the unique problems facing Alaskan producers. I wish you all God's Blessings. Finally, in early July, Sue Benz will be arriving as the Statistician for Alaska. She is excited about coming here and is looking forward to working with you.

---

**Internet Access** to all ALASKA Reports at:

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/ak>

**Internet Access** to all NASS Reports at:

<http://www.usda.gov/nass/>

DAVID M. MUELLER

Agricultural Statistician

Phone: 1-800-478-6079